
**Embassy of the United States
New Delhi, India**

American Embassy Newsletter for American Citizens – Volume 7: March, 2008

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American Citizen Services—New Hours Starting 31 March!!!!

In order to better serve the American community in New Delhi, the American Citizens Unit will be changing its business hours. Starting on Monday, 31 March, the ACS unit will be open for business from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. We are available outside of these hours for emergency services. To contact us, call (011) 2419-8000, ext. 4249 or 8562 or 4040 or 4032. You can also e-mail us at acsnd@state.gov.

2. Elections 2008- Absentee Voting Information

American Citizens living abroad are eligible to participate in presidential and state primary elections, run-off elections, and special elections that occur throughout the year. While many of the state primary elections have already passed, it is never too late to obtain more information on absentee voting procedures, particularly if you intend to participate in the presidential election in November, 2008.

American citizens may pick up voting registration forms, absentee ballots, and consult a voting reference guide at the ACS Unit, Embassy New Delhi.

The official U.S. Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov. It has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application, state-specific instructions for completing the form, links to state and local officials, and a downloadable emergency ballot.

Be an educated voter. To add your name to the distribution list of voting-related news releases, send an e-mail to vote@fvap.ncr.gov.

3. TAX SEASON- IRS Representative to Visit Mumbai—Phone Appointments Available!

A representative from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will be in Mumbai to present a free tax seminar and hold phone consultations for those who are required to file U.S. federal income taxes, including American citizens, lawful permanent residents, and certain nonimmigrant visa holders. Phone consultations can be scheduled by American citizens who reside outside the Mumbai area.

Consultations via Telephone

The tax representative will also be available for five-minute phone consultations from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2008 and Tuesday, March 18, 2008. Ten-minute in-person consultations will also be available from 2:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. on March 17 and 18, 2008 at the American Consulate General, B. Desai Road (Breach Candy), Mumbai 400026. If you wish to make an appointment, please be prepared to address specific questions regarding your U.S. tax obligations. The IRS representative cannot complete your tax return for you.

Appointments are required for the personal and phone-in consultations. They are available on a first-come-first-serve basis. To make an appointment, please call 022-2363-3611, ext. 4306 or send an e-mail to mumbaiacs@state.gov.

Tax Seminar

The tax seminar will take place on Wednesday, March 19, 2008, from 09:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the American Center in the Auditorium. The American Center, also known in the area as "USIS," is located at 4 New Marine Lines, Churchgate, on the same street at Bombay Hospital, one block east of Churchgate station near SNDT College. If you wish to attend the tax seminar, please call 022-2363-3611, ext. 4306 or send an e-mail to mumbaiacs@state.gov. Please provide the names of all attendees and plan to bring photo identification to the meeting.

The regular deadline for calendar year filers of Form 1040 is April 15. However, certain U.S. citizens or residents living overseas can take advantage of an automatic two month extension to file and pay any taxes owed. To determine whether you are eligible for the two month extension, please read IRS Publication 54 "Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad," available on the IRS' website at www.irs.gov. Printed copies of this document and many other IRS forms and publications are also available at the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai. The American Citizen Services of the U.S. Consulate in Mumbai is located at Lincoln House, 78 Bhulabhai Desai Road, 400026, telephone 91-22-2363-3611 extn. 4306; fax 91-22-2367-7026. The number for after-hours emergencies is 91-22-2363-3611. The fax number is 91-22-2363-0350. The Consulate's email address is mumbaiacs@state.gov and its Internet web page is <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>

4. Avian Influenza Awareness: An Update

Health professionals are concerned that the continued spread of a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus among animals (mainly poultry) in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe has the potential to significantly threaten human health. If highly pathogenic avian influenza, such as the H5N1 subtype, mutates and spreads easily from one person to another, influenza could break out globally, and lead to a pandemic. While there are no reports of **sustained** human-to-human transmission of such a virus, the U.S. Government and international health agencies are advising Americans living, working and/or traveling overseas how to prepare for a pandemic, should one strike.

Private American citizens should be aware that it may not be possible to travel during an outbreak. Governments may close borders suddenly and without advance warning; commercial air, land and sea carriers could curtail or cancel service; and restricting travel may be the best way to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus. These developments could impede a return to the United States or travel to another country or region. Therefore, Americans who are overseas during a pandemic may need to remain where they are until conditions improve, a situation which could last several months.

Private American Citizens Living and/or Working Overseas: Consider local conditions and

evaluate your ability to maintain adequate supplies of food, water, and medication should a pandemic result in borders closing or disruptions in international travel. Decide on your optimal location in a pandemic and plan accordingly. Ask your doctor in advance about obtaining appropriate medication for treatment if you become ill, keeping in mind it could take many months to develop and produce sufficient quantities of a vaccine during a pandemic. Remember that U.S. embassies, consulates and military facilities lack the legal authority, capability, and resources to dispense medications, vaccines or medical care to private American citizens overseas. If you are a private American citizen (e.g. living, working, touring, studying overseas) you will need to rely on local health care providers and locally-available medications since U.S. government facilities will not be able to provide medications or treat you.

Short-Term Visitors, Tourists, and Students Abroad: Consult with your doctor before you travel and ask about medications you should take with you. Research the availability and quality of medical facilities at your destination. Be aware that hotels may cease to provide housekeeping and food services during a pandemic. Consider changing your travel plans or returning to the U.S. once there is evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission, since commercial air transport may become unavailable at an early point.

Plan to Remain in Country: If the WHO declares a pandemic, Americans who are overseas should be prepared to remain in country for an extended period. You should avoid non-essential travel beyond your home and workplace and you should limit activities that could expose you to others who may be ill. Based on varying conditions abroad, Americans should prepare contingency plans and emergency supplies (non-perishable food, potable water or water-purification supplies, medication, etc.) for the possibility of remaining in country for at least two and up to twelve weeks. Visit www.pandemicflu.gov to see examples of comprehensive planning checklists for individuals, businesses, schools, and other groups.

What Can You Do? You should **wash** your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to eradicate viruses and bacteria. When soap and water are not available, apply a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60 percent alcohol content. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Get vaccinated against seasonal flu. Ask your employer, organization or school about pandemic contingency plans. And please review detailed community mitigation guidelines as well as information on the use of masks and anti-viral medications in a pandemic, also available on www.pandemicflu.gov.

What About During a Pandemic? During a pandemic, people should practice social distancing measures such as teleworking, limiting face-to-face meetings, avoiding crowds, and maintaining a distance of six (6) feet or more from other people. Healthy employees should consult with their employer about reporting to work during a pandemic, taking into account local conditions and the risk of infection. Sick people, or those who reside with a sick person, should consult with their healthcare provider to determine the appropriate course of action which could include home treatment.

Keep Informed: American citizens living in or traveling to countries with human or animal cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza should consider the potential risks and plan accordingly. Keep current with the latest medical guidance and practical information. Visit www.travel.state.gov to review the Country-Specific Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Alerts for up-to-date assessments of conditions in specific countries and to obtain additional information on pandemic influenza. http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health_3096.html?css=print

5. Social Security Administration and Veterans Affairs Economic Stimulus Payment Eligibility

Even if you are not otherwise required to file a tax return, you may still be entitled to an economic stimulus payment from the federal government.

WHAT YOU COULD GET: You could receive a payment of \$300 for individuals or \$600 if you are married and file a joint tax return with your spouse. Eligible taxpayers who qualify for a payment may receive an additional \$300 for each qualifying child. To qualify a child must be under age 17 as of December 31, 2007.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO: All you have to do to get the stimulus payment is file a 2007 IRS Form 1040 or Form 1040A and report at least \$3,000 in qualifying income on the form. You can include the amount of your SSA benefits to qualify for the stimulus payment.

QUALIFYING INCOME: Add the amount of your Social Security benefits to other qualifying income, such as wage earnings or certain benefits paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to reach the \$3,000 requirement. However, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) does not count as qualifying income for the stimulus payment.

WHAT YOU FILL OUT: You will enter your name, address, Social Security Number, and filing status on the form. Then just enter the amount of benefits reported to you in January on Form 1099-SSA on Line 14a of Form 1040A or Line 20a of Form 1040. If you don't have Form 1099-SSA, you can estimate your Social Security benefits by taking the monthly amount you received last year and multiplying it by the number of months you received a check. If you need to include wage earnings to reach the \$3,000 qualifying level, enter that amount on Line 7 of Form 1040A or 1040. In addition, you should write the words "Stimulus Payment" at the top of the 1040A or 1040.

IS THE STIMULUS PAYMENT TAXABLE NEXT YEAR? No!

WILL THIS PAYMENT AFFECT THE AMOUNT OF SSA BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE? No!

WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY PAYMENT? The IRS will begin mailing checks in early May.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: In late March 2008, the IRS will mail a packet of information to recipients of Social Security benefits who did not file a tax return last year. The packet will contain guidance to help you claim the stimulus payment. If you need information in the interim, you can visit the IRS web site at www.irs.gov.

6. FAQ on American Citizen Services (ACS)

Q: Are there any holidays coming up during which the American Citizen Services Unit will be closed?

A: Upcoming Indian and American holidays on which the Embassy will be closed are 21 March (Good Friday/Id-E-Milad), April 14 (Ram Navami), April 18 (Mahavir Jayanti), May 26 (Memorial Day), and July 4 (Independence Day)

Q: How do I register with the U.S. Embassy? Are there any other important websites I should be aware of?

A: U.S. Embassy Website: <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov>

On-line American citizen registration: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs> (also available from Embassy website at "Registering Your Presence in India")

General Travel Information: <http://travel.state.gov>

Q: I think I may have missed a warden message. Is there an archive of past warden messages I can access on the internet?

A: If you believe you may have missed a recent “warden message” sent to American citizens in India, all recent warden messages issued by the Embassy are available on the Embassy website at http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/warden_information.html.
